

Iowa Department of Education

Kindergarten Literacy Assessment Report

House File 761

Iowa Department of Education

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KINDERGARTEN LITERACY ASSESSMENT REPORT

House File (HF) 761: Kindergarten Assessment

The 2005 General Assembly passed legislation requiring local school districts to complete the following:

- Administer Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) or a kindergarten benchmark assessment adopted by the Department of Education (DE) to every kindergarten student enrolled in the district no later than October 1 [lowa Code 279.60(16)];
- Collect from each parent guardian or legal custodian of a kindergarten student enrolled in the district, information including, but not limited to, preschool attendance and demographic factors; and
- Report the results of the assessment and preschool information to the DE no later than January 1 of that school year.

Assessment Tools Used

The DE aligned kindergarten assessment requirements of HF 761 with the statutory requirements for comprehensive school improvement and early intervention/class size reduction. The assessments the districts select must be technically adequate.

Assessment Results

In the 2008-2009 school year, 98 percent of the school districts and buildings with kindergarten classrooms submitted kindergarten assessment data. (This percentage does not reflect buildings with prekindergarten or transitional kindergarten.) A total of 35,606 students were enrolled in kindergarten. Assessment scores were reported for all kindergarten students.

Figure 1 depicts the various types of kindergarten literacy assessment instruments used in school buildings. Each of these assessment tools measures a different aspect of sound (phonemic) awareness in young children. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of schools report data using the DIBELS measure, for the five categories of assessment tools used.

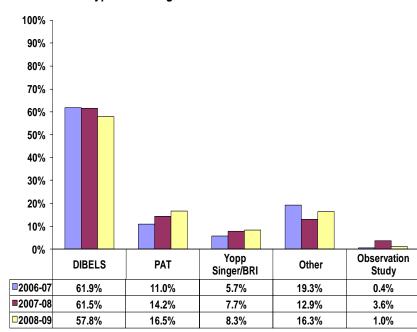


Figure 1: Percent of Iowa School Buildings And Each Type of Kindergarten Assessment Tool Administered

Data Source: Project Easier, Iowa Department of Education, 2008-2009

DIBELS Data

The DIBELS assessment measures children's literacy skills for identifying beginning sounds of words by pointing to the picture matching the sound. Districts submitted data to the DE using Project Easier. Figure 2 represents DIBELS data for a five-year trend, from 2004-2005 to 2008-2009. As indicated in Figure 2, the percent of children proficient in beginning sounds as measured by DIBELS increased by 2 percent from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009.

Measure (N=19,510). 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 0% 2005-06 2006-07 2007-08 2008-09 Percent Proficient 53% 62%

Figure 2. Percent of Children Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Identifying Beginning Sounds Using DIBELS Assessment

Data Source. Project Easier, Iowa Department of Education, 2007-2008 *Note:* Data regarding other approved assessment instruments will be reported in the Annual Condition of Education Report, 2008.

Report of Preschool Participation

Districts reported the number of children that had attended preschool at any time 12 months prior to registering for kindergarten. Districts gather the information through parent report or district records. The term "preschool" was not specifically defined in legislation and thus could have resulted in very different meanings for parents ranging from a childcare setting in a home to a private enterprise. The amount of time devoted to instruction could have been interpreted very differently by parents. The data collected and analyzed should be interpreted with extreme caution. In 2007, 35,606 children entered kindergarten. Districts indicated that based on parent report, 25,670 children attended preschool. Since the term "preschool" was a local definition, this data provides a broad interpretation of preschool based on parent perceptions.

Recommendations

Results are supportive of statewide efforts to increase proficiency of literacy skills. Supporting statewide efforts include implementation of the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, the National Association for the Education of Young Children Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the ongoing Every Child Reads: ages 3 to 5 training. Although the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds was established in 2007-2008, the true impact of this program will be realized with each consecutive year of implementation.

Current data indicate the following recommendations:

- Continue state funding supporting the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of quality preschool programming;
- Support quality preschool programs through maintaining program standards and achieving lowa Core Curriculum for preschoolers;
- Support quality professional development that addresses the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, Iowa Early Learning Standards and early literacy skills; and
- Provide funding to support the delivery of technical assistance through the area education agency early childhood staff.